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ABSTRACT

Noting that over 11 million children are involved in early care and education outside their homes, and that the quality of the services these children receive depends on the knowledge and skills of the people who care for and teach them, this report presents the results of the first national study of career development in early care and education. It examines regulations, training opportunities, and financial support that shape the preparation of center- and home-based practitioners. The study revealed the lack of a coordinated system to develop well-trained practitioners to work with young children in homes, centers, Head Start programs, or schools. Millions of practitioners are not required to have any early childhood training. Training that develops the full range of essential early care and education knowledge and skills is not consistently available or accessible. Earnings in the field are dramatically low, and financial support to pursue training is frequently insufficient. The report recommends the creation of a career development system that contains the following elements: (1) systemic planning; (2) effective quality controls for the profession; (3) progressive role-related, articulated training; (4) recognition and reward systems; and (5) expanded and coordinated financing. Appendix A contains the data tables for the study and Appendix B profiles promising training programs and career development initiatives. A glossary and a separate executive summary are included with the report. Contains 65 references. (TJQ)

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